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CHANGES IN THE STRUCTURE AND ROLES OF SPANISH-AMERICAN FAMILIES OF NORTHERN NEW MEXICO.

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DATA FOR THIS PAPER WERE OBTAINED FROM EXAMINATION OF AVAILABLE LITERATURE AND FROM FIELD WORK IN SAN MIGUEL AND MORA COUNTIES OF NORTHERN NEW MEXICO. THE EXTENDED PATRIARCHAL FAMILY WAS THE PRIMARY SOCIAL SYSTEM AMONG THE SPANISH AMERICANS, OFTEN CONSISTING OF MEMBERS OF THREE OR FOUR GENERATIONS HEADED BY THE GRANDFATHER. THIS FAMILY COOPERATED AS A SINGLE, TIGHTLY KNIT, POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, AND SOCIAL UNIT. DOMINANCE AND AUTHORITY WERE RELATED TO SEX AND AGE -THE MALES WERE DOMINANT OVER FEMALES AND THE OLDER MEMBERS HAD AUTHORITY OVER THE YOUNGER FAMILY MEMBERS. THE PRESSURES OF URBANIZATION, INDUSTRIALIZATION, AND LAND LOSSES HAVE BROKEN THIS TRADITIONAL FAMILY PATTERN IN ALL BUT THE MOST REMOTE VILLAGES. THE ADJUSTMENT OF THE LOWER-CLASS SPANISH AMERICAN FAMILY TO URBAN LIVING DEPENDS UPON THE HUSBAND'S SALARY. IF IT IS NOT ADEQUATE, THE WIFE MUST SEEK EMPLOYMENT, THUS STRENGTHENING HER ROLE AND DIMINISHING THE HUSBAND'S ROLE. THE MORE EDUCATED AND ACCULTURATED SPANISH AMERICAN FAMILIES TEND TO EMULATE THE NUCLEAR FAMILY MODEL OF THE ANGLO AMERICAN. (SF)

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CHANGES IN THE STRUCTURE AND ROLES OF SPANISH-AMERICAN FAMILIES OF NORTHERN NEW MEXICO

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In this paper, an attempt will be made to delineate recent changes in the structure of the Spanish-speaking family of northern New Mexico with special reference to the status-roles of husband, wife, and children. The term Spanish American is used here to describe the Spanish-speaking inhabitants of northern New Mexico, southern Colorado, and northwestern Arizona. The problem of terminology among students of Spanish-speaking groups of the Southwest is becoming serious. There is a definite need for agreement and for clarification in naming the quite diverse Spanish-speaking groupings in this area, as substantial differences in racial composition, culture, urban-rural residence, social organization, and in differential exposure to the dominant Anglo-American culture exists. It is proposed in this paper that the term Spanish-American be reserved for the Spanish-speaking inhabitants of northern New Mexico, southern Colorado, and northwestern Arizona. It is acceptable to them and has found a predominant place in the literature. Other terms should be devised for Spanish-speaking groups in Texas, southern Arizona, California, and other sections.

The data for this study were obtained through a detailed examination of the available literature and by field work in San Miguel and Mora counties in northern New Mexico. The conclusions of this paper are somewhat tentative. There is an unfortunate tendency to conclude from scattered and highly localized studies that a basic cultural uniformity exists throughout the entire Spanish-American area. It is the author's contention that more research and detailed analysis may uncover significant regional differences in the culture and in the social institutions.

The Spanish Americans are descendents of the Spanish-speaking settlers who moved north from Mexico after the Spanish reconquest in the late 17th century. Settlements were first founded along the Rio Grande River with Santa Fe as a center. As Indian pressures permitted, the Spanish Americans expanded up and down the Rio Grande from Las Cruces in the south to the San Luis Valley in the north. Their villages soon dotted every mountain valley in northern New Mexico and southern Colorado and spread slowly down every stream that flowed from the northern mountains. By the middle of the 19th century, the Spanish Americans had penetrated deeply into the plains of eastern Colorado and New Mexico and western Texas. This eastward movement met the westward moving Texan cattle frontier and was rapidly rolled back. The retreat of the Spanish Americans before cattle-ranchers is still continuing in eastern New Mexico. 1.

Until recently, the majority of Spanish-Americans lived in compact rural farm villages. The houses in the village tended to be elongated one-story adobe structures with barns and other structures in the rear. In the center of the village around or near the plaza were located the church, the school, and whatever businesses might be present. The more isolated villages are still without electricity, utilities, and passable roads. Many villagers along the major roads, because of poverty, may not utilize available electricity, water or sewage systems.

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The majority of villagers until the last few years were dependent upon subsistence agriculture. Each village family owned one or more strips of irrigated land upon which were grown wheat, corn, beans, chili, and some vegetables. Livestock was grazed upon the village commons. When cash was needed, village men sought seasonal employment in the harvest fields, in the mines, and in urban communities of the region. The village economy functioned fairly well until the depression and the droughts of the 1930's. The chronic and massive loss of land to the Anglo-American through violence, entrapment in a strange and alien tax and legal system, ignorance of civic and property rights, fear, and what amounted to confiscation without remuneration by state and federal governments along with rapid population increase destroyed the economic basis and culture isolation of the Spanish American villages. 2.

The inability of the village to function in traditional ways, government, agriculture and relief programs, the impact of World War II, the building of large government installations in northern New Mexico, massive Anglo migration into the area accompanied by heavy Spanish-American emigration into Southwestern and Rocky Mountain cities, Anglo control of the educational systems, welfare programs and urbanization have and are bringing about rapid social and cultural changes that may well threaten the continued existence of the traditional Spanish-American culture. 3.

The traditional social organization of the Spanish Americans was structured upon four basic social systems: (1) the village community, (2) the patriarchal extended family, (3) the patron system, and (4) the Roman Catholic Church. Where these systems still function without major social change, the villages are most resistent to acculturation. Where they have weakened, acculturation is accelerated.

As Burma has pointed out: "It is impossible to over-emphasize the importance of the home village to the Spanish American." The inhabitants of a village maintained a strong sense of community identification. Even though many villages have been abandoned or depopulated by recent emigration, village identification is carried into the city. Many families resident in urban areas refuse to sell their village lands. There always exists among them the hope that someday they or their children will be able to return to their village. The sense of belonging to a specific village with a distinctive personality and way of life is one of the basic characteristics of Spanish-American life. 4.

The village leader, except in the far northern villages along the Spanish-American frontier, was the patron. He was usually the head of a large, powerful, and wealthy patriarchal extended family. His wealth, his political power, his willingness to assist his fellow villagers, and his ability to exemplify basic village values, led his fellow villagers through a process of consensus to award him the position of the village leader, its patron. He was expected to provide employment, assist the poor, resolve disputes, take care of those in trouble, represent the village in its dealings with the outside, and call the village inhabitants together for communal tasks. 5.

Even though the power of the patron is steadily weakening, he is still found in northern New Mexico and southern Colorado. In areas where he has disappeared, his disappearance has led to atomization, factionalism, apathy,

and passive dependence upon government agencies. Many liberals in the Southwest criticize the patron for his short-sighted leadership, his exploitation of his own people, his unwillingness to support programs for better government or for education, and his tendency to sell his political influence to the highest bidder. They have not yet, however, faced up to the problem of developing alternative leadership systems that will function within the cultural values of the Spanish Americans. 6.

The vast majority of Spanish Americans are Roman Catholics. Their culture is suffused with the beliefs, dogmas, and practices of Catholicism. Until recently, a Spanish-American Protestant was regarded as a traitor to his people and to their way of life. The village Catholicism, however, was a folk Catholicism that had developed in isolated villages rarely visited by priests for several hundred years.

As a result, the influence of the priest was weak, and the villagers were seldom exposed to the formal sacraments. Their religion revolved around the worship of the village saint often housed in chapels owned by prominent village families. Religious worship was organized around ceremonies that could be directed by lay leaders. In many villages, the Penitente order supplied both religious leaders and ceremonies. 7.

In recent years, the placement of non Spanish-speaking priests of Irish, French and German origin in the villages had led to a persistent conflict between the church hierarchy and the inhabitants. Priests tend to regard the local village religion as a mixture of paganism and superstition that must be eradicated. As a result, the loyalty of the villagers to formal Catholicism has been seriously weakened. Large numbers of the poorer village inhabitants are joining the more fundamental Protestant denominations such as Jehova's Witnesses, the Church of God, and similar groupings. Their activities in the villages have weakened village integration. 8.

The extended patriarchal family was the primary social system among the Spanish Americans. As Loomis has mentioned, "In few societies does the family have a more prominent place among the social systems and organizations than does the family in Spanish and Latin American culture." There were no competing primary or secondary institutions or associations. Until very recently, the functions of education, socialization, social control, religion, social welfare, and earning a living were all carried out within the family. Even politicians in their pursuit for votes had to carefully consider the size and influence of the extended families in their precincts. 9.

The Spanish-American family consisted of three or four generations living in one family system. The head of the family was the grandfather. Under his authority were his wife, their married sons and their families, their unmarried children, aunts and uncles, cousins to the third or fourth degree, and adopted children that might be living with the family. The extended family was marked by formal respect for every member, an inner warmth, and a strong we-feeling. Family members were formally addressed by their status title in the family, such as grandfather, grandmother, father, mother, uncle or aunt. When any member of the family was discussed, his title was prefixed to his name. 10.

Large extended families occupied specific sections of a village or even of a larger urban community. Many smaller villages in New Mexico were inhabited by a single extended family. Related extended families usually lived in peace and cooperated in village affairs. However, in some villages, related extended families feuded bitterly in politics and in business. Seldom did such feuding lead to violence. 11.

The extended patriarchal family cooperated as a single economic, political, and social unit. All property owned by member nuclear families or individuals in rural villages came under the control of the grandfather. The proceeds, whether cash income or harvests, went into a common storehouse. Family members had the right to draw upon the storehouse according to their needs. Relatives who became unemployed or lost their land were also provided with necessary assistence. 12.

Dominance and authority in the families were structured upon the related variables of sex and age. Males were dominant over females in every age grouping beyond childhood. Older members of the family had authority over younger members. The husband had virtually complete authority over his wife and children. The wife was expected to be submissive, obedient, and long suffering. Tradition dictated that she remained in her own home except to go to Church or to visit intimate relatives. If she went out, she was accompanied by her children or by relatives. Her husband, on the other hand, was free to come and to go as he pleased. He controlled the family purse and spent its funds without having to consult other family members. Members of his family were expected to be guided by his decisions in their life's activities. 13.

The wife in her own home was subordinate but not subjugated. Obedient and tolerant toward her husband, she was loved by her children who feared and respected their mother. She learned their secrets, their hopes, and their ambitions. She protected them from the father by concealing their minor deviations. In many Spanish-American families, the mother and children were united in a tacit conspiracy to conceal family secrets and home matters from the father. She was expected, however, to notify her husband on matters of importance and not to make important family decisions by herself. 14.

Brothers were expected to protect and to respect their sisters who were subordinate to them as long as they lived. Spanish-American children were taught to be courteous, obedient, respectful to older persons, and obedient to their parents, relatives, and older siblings. Quarreling between brothers and sisters was rigidly repressed. Older brothers and sisters were expected to care for the younger members of their family. The relationship between siblings was close and based upon mutual respect and reciprocal assistence as long as they lived. This sense of responsibility did not end at marriage, and girls were often subjected to two family systems. Sibling responsibilities extended to cousins of the third and fourth degree. 15.

Children regarded their uncles and aunts as parents. Uncles and aunts exercised parental control over their nieces and nephews. Children frequently visited their relatives for long periods of time. Although they were expected to be obedient and respectful to their own parents, they were especially considerate and respectful to their grandparents. 16.

The role and status of the oldest son and the close cooperation between brothers are several interesting characteristics of the Spanish-American family system. The oldest brother had the authority of a parent over his younger brothers and sisters. This authority lasted as long as he lived. He was accepted as the family leader upon the death of his father and was expected to provide for his mother and siblings. 17.

The oldest daughter had some authority as a mother figure. The mother depended upon her to assist in operating the home and in looking after the children. If the mother died, the full burden of running the home fell upon her.

Ties between brothers and sisters, in general, were very close, permanent, binding, and reciprocal. A member of a family could rely upon his brothers and sisters for whatever assistence that he might need. If a married family member were so unfortunate as to have no children, a brother or sister with a large family would give them one or more children. The relationship between brothers was especially close. They cooperated closely together long after the father died in working their lands, in politics, and in other village matters. Family unity remained solid. 18.

Such a patriarchal extended family reached its most complex organization among the land-owning ricos or ranchers. Over large areas, these families were woven into a powerful regional social grouping through intermarriage and the compadrazgo. The wealthiest and most prominent rancher was accorded the status of the patron. The many peons and Indian slaves were accepted as family members through the patron-peon relationship. Based on large fortified ranch houses these enormous family groupings maintained an elaborate, formal, and lavish way of life.

The small independent landowners that inhabited the villages were not as dependent nor as subordinate to the village patron, as were the peons to the wealthy rancher. The village family was extended and patriarchal, although confined to but one or two villages. It did not include as many individuals nor recognize as extended a parentela as the family of the rico. The family patriarch did not have the power to enforce his authority as did the rico, but he was supported by custom and tradition. Within his own family circle in the village, he was the patriarch.

There is little data available on the family structure of the peon class. Interviews with families that occupied the status of a peon seem to indicate that their families were more nuclear than extended. The peon bound in debt to his patron and unable to leave the ranch was not in a position to exert patriarchal authority. His wife and children worked for the patron and were subject to the authority of the patron's family.

There were no village associations or organizations outside of the extended patriarchal family of the type that are characteristic of Anglo communities. The villages were composed of extended families whose patriarchal heads under the direction of the village patron composed the governing body of the village. Among family patriarchs, age and wisdom determined status. When the patron figure disappeared, and the unity of the extended families was broken by migration, the village became atomized and factionalized. 19.

The structure of the Spanish-American family enshrined in tradition and religion and protected by physical and cultural isolation was seriously weakened by the destruction of the subsistence village agricultural economy in the 1930's. The chronic and massive loss of land through fraud, violence, and tax manipulation to the Anglos accompanied by a heavy rate of population increase eroded away the land base of the village. Prolonged drought and the temporary end of migratory labor accompanied by government assistence programs destroyed the traditional independence of the village. The impact of World War II, the development of massive government installations in the Spanish-American area accompanied by urbanization and large scale immigration of Anglos brought the physical and cultural isolation of the Spanish-Americans to an end. 20.

At the present time, Spanish-American families are spread out along a continuum. At the one end are the traditional Spanish-American extended patriarchal families found in the more isolated villages less affected by cultural and economic changes. At the other end are found disorganized urban nuclear families marked by high rates of juvenile delinquency, husband desertion, poverty, illigitimacy, apathy, and culture shock. There is no longer a single Spanish-American family system.

Some changes can be noted. Migration has carried away large numbers of the village population. The decision to abandon the village and kinship groups is always a difficult one to make, and it is never made with the idea of permanent departure. People leave with the hope that they can earn enough money to return to buy more land or that someday there will be employment around the village. They are always making trips home to see their relatives or to spend their unemployment compensation. 21.

The first family to leave is usually the family of a college or high-school graduate or a veteran. It may also be a family unable to make a living in the traditional manner. It is usually a family whose male head has found employment in a city and then returned for his family. Once the nuclear family is established in the distant city, it is no longer under the control of the grandfather or of the older brother.

Strong efforts are made, however, to maintain strong and intimate kinship bonds. Visits back to the home village and to the grandparents are very frequent. Visits are also made to brothers and sisters who live in other areas. But the authority of the grandparents is strongly weakened. They can no longer control their sons or their families. Once one brother has left, others may be tempted to go. They visit the home of the brother resident in an urban area and become familiar with urban conditions. In time, one or more will find a job, send for their families, and settle close by the home of the first migrant. Cousins, nephews, and other relatives, married or unmarried, will come and go until almost the entire family may be introduced into the socio-economic structure of the urban community. The departing sons will usually leave a child or two with the grandparents to assist them, but the extended patriarchal family is broken. In the city, the cooperation between brothers still exists as perhaps the strongest family bond. The oldest brother, if present, still exerts some authority and leadership over the family grouping. 22.

If related nuclear families migrate to different states, kinship bonds weaken but are still preserved by extensive visiting. Related families travel long distances for frequent and prolonged visits. Brothers, sisters, nephews, and nieces are invited to live with a family for varying periods of time. An unemployed nuclear family will move in with a related family. If children are orphaned, or families meet with serious problems, they will receive what assistence the related nuclear families can render.

The majority of Spanish-American families entering the large cities of the Pacific Coast or the Rocky Mountains, whether of the landless peon class or of the small landholding village population, are poorly educated, unskilled workers with little knowledge of Anglo society or working habits. They find it difficult to adjust to industry or the city. Frequently they are in need of assistence. Often their related families cannot provide the needed help, so they are forced to turn to government agencies. On a limited cash income, they may begin to resent relatives who move in with them. 23.

One of the most important factors in the adjustment of the lower-class Spanish-American family to an urban environment is the employment of the husband. If he secures a job with a salary adequate for the family needs, the family will adjust to urban conditions without major social disorganization. If he cannot, the burden will then fall on his wife. She will be forced reluctantly to find work, usually as a domestic. The impact upon the status and role of the husband is extremely strong. He loses his self-respect and feels diminished in his definition of a man and a husband. The wife will at first turn over all her income to her husband. If he drinks heavily or misuses the money, in time she will come to resent it and to conceal most of it from him. It usually takes several years of mistreatment and resentment before she rebels against her husband. The husband may then either beat her and the children, turn to alcoholism, or he will desert his family to salvage his own self-respect. The deserted wife may either seek the protection of her relatives or struggle along as best she can. The fact that a Spanish American married woman can find employment more readily than can her husband has a profound weakening effect upon the family. 24.

Another important factor in the urban evolution of the Spanish-American migrant family is the ability of the parents to satisfy their children's economic needs. If they are able to, the children tend to remain more controllable and obedient. If they cannot, many children will drop out of school in order to assist their parents. Others become bitter and turn from the home to the street. Parents who cannot provide for their children have few efficient discipline techniques. The parents will seldom try to discipline their teenage sons, as they consider them to be men, responsible for their own behavior. Punishment when used may be so brutal as to drive the boys away from home. The boys always find refuge in the homes of relatives and friends who may intercede with the boys' parents.

Here and there in lower class urban neighborhoods may be found extended patriarchal families cooperating and working closely together. These families are admired and respected by their neighbors. They are also feared. The writer is familiar with one extended patriarchal family living in an El Paso slum whose younger members roam the slums freely and safely. Fighting gangs do not attack them. They know that all the cousins, uncles, and brothers of

the assaulted boy would come to the boy's assistence or would seek revenge. However, the majority of Spanish-American families in the slums are nuclear families or fragments of nuclear families. 25.

Among the better educated and acculturated Spanish Americans, one also finds a bewildering mixture of family types. There exist still a few extended wealthy patriarchal families controlled closely by the grandfather. These are powerful clans that reside either on ranches or in nearby urban areas. They work and cooperate closely together in the traditional manner. The women, even though they may have a college education, are still subordinate. 26.

Among many Spanish American professional and business groupings an almost ostentatious desire to imitate the nuclear family model of the Anglo Americans exist. They repudiate the Spanish language, the Spanish-American culture, and the Spanish-American grouping. The wife may or may not work, but she is granted the position of the Anglo wife. Her opinion is consulted frequently. She is expected to join many associations, such as P.T.A.'s and clubs. The obligations of kinship are reluctantly acknowledged. Financial assistence may be given to relatives in need but visits from unacculturated relatives are resented. If there are aging parents, they are apt to be placed in nursing homes. The children are carefully reared following Anglo methods. The older children have no special position in the home.

In this type of a family system, there are many detectable stresses and strains. The husband and wife are not quite familiar with the scripts of the roles that they are playing. In moments of family tension, husbands suddenly become authoritarian and patriarchal. Parents may revert back to traditional methods of handling children much to the surprise of their offspring. The husband may come to resent the ways of his modern wife and suspect her fidelity, as she comes and goes. The wife herself may vaciliate between independency and dependency on her husband and regard him as somewhat ineffective and weak. 27.

Among the rural and many urban Spanish-Americans, the extended patriarchal family is weakening although many of its characteristics remain. The nuclear components of the extended family maintain separate residences. The grandparents are honored and respected. They are listened to but seldom are they able to offer effective advice in a rapidly changing world. Their ability to control their children now depends on the property that they control. If they have little, their authority disappears.

Kinship bonds are still strong. Related families visit each other frequently and relatives may stay for long periods of time. Family reunions are very frequent. Families that are unemployed or are in trouble can obtain financial assistence or family support from most of their brothers and sisters. The family still plays an important role in social control and in welfare. It is, however, the relationship between brothers that becomes the salient family characteristics. The older brother is still respected, but as he may live in a different community from most of his brothers and sisters, his traditional authority is apt to disappear. 28.

Within the general Spanish American family, the status of the wife has improved. She will usually not work after marriage, although many are beginning to seek employment. If she does work, she will turn her money over to

her husband. He is still the patriarchal head of his nuclear family and will still make the more important decisions without always consulting wife or older children. Relationships within the family are more informal, and children have considerably more freedom. They are still expected to be respectful and obedient. Sibling relationships are warm, affectionate, and free from quarreling or serious strains. Older siblings maintain considerable authority over younger ones.

Although children have won considerable freedom, the family environment is not permissive. Girls may work outside the home before marriage but they are still subject to parental control and authority. Both boys and girls who work are expected to give their parents most of what they make. Adolescent boys are permitted to date freely providing that they do not mention dating activities within the home. Many families will still not permit their daughters to date before going to college. Others accept controlled dating. The girl is not permitted to date many different boys but is expected to go steady or to date only one or two. Varied dating will definitely shadow a Spanish American girl's reputation. The girl is not permitted to bring her boyfriend into her home or to introduce him to her parents. This would be regarded as an insult. When a couple has agreed upon marriage, the boy will come with his parents to make a formal visit to the girl's home. Marriage ceremonies may either follow the Anglo system or the traditional Spanish-American model. 29.

Although the role of the oldest son has weakened, he is expected to assist his parents with his younger brothers and sisters. He is still granted deference and obedience in many families. Brothers cooperate closely and are expected to assist and protect their sisters. Sibling relationships usually are warm and intimate. They are marked by a freedom from competition and quarreling.

In summary, the Spanish American extended patriarchal family is undergoing a process of differentiation and social change. The rate of change varies considerably among urban and rural groupings. Important class differences are developing. The lower class urban Spanish-Americans are slowly acquiring many of the family characteristics of the lower class Anglo family. The middle class Spanish-American family, if acculturated, will follow the model of the middle class Anglo family. If not, it will retain many characteristics of the traditional family patterns. In the latter groups, changes are taking place slowly and unevenly.

Among the few Spanish-American upper class groupings that have managed to retain wealth and land, the traditional extended patriarchal family flourishes with few changes. Women perhaps will have a greater voice in decision making, and young adults have more freedom in selecting a career and a mate. In those families whose financial position has deteriorated, the patriarchal extended family tends to break apart into its component nuclear families. Although brothers still recognize the claims of kinship and come to each other's assistance, strong tensions may develop. This is especially true when one nuclear family enjoys a stronger financial position than related families.

FOOTNOTES

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7. Material derived from interviews conducted in San Miguel and Mora Counties.

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12. Kluckhohn, op. cit., pp. 197, 175-176.

13. Sjoberg, op. cit. pp. 11-13. Data also derived from interviews in Mora and San Miguel counties, New Mexico, 1960-1962.

14. Florence Hawley and Donovan Senter, "Group-Designed Behavior Patterns in Two Reculturating Groups," Southwestern Journal of Anthropology, 2, (Summer, 1946).

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18. Data Derived from interviews and field studies in Mora and San Miguel Counties, New Mexico, 1960-1961.

19. Johansen, op.cit. pp. 154-155. See also Wesley R. "Manzano; A Study of Community Disorganization," (Unpublished Doctoral dissertation, University of New Mexico, 1941).

20. Knowlton, "Causes of Land Loss Among the Spanish Americans in Northern New Mexico, op.cit. See also Knowlton, "One Approach to the Economic Problems of Northern New Mexico" , op.cit.

21. Ibid. See also Regional Development Association of Northern New Mexico, Provisional Overall Economic Development Plan for North Central New Mexico, (Santa Fe, 1963. Clark S. Knowlton, A Preliminary Overall Economic Development Plan for San Miguel County, N.M. (Las Vegas, N.M.: San Miguell County Area Development Committee, 1961), pp. 14-31.

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23. Data derived from interviews in Las Vegas, Santa Fe, and Albuquerque, New Mexico and in Denver, Colorado.

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26. Ibid.

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28. Ibid.

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